

RESIDENTIAL CODE COMPLIANCE INSPECTION GUIDELINES
CITY OF RICHMOND HEIGHTS

The following information is meant to provide some general guidelines for a typical housing inspection. The list is not all inclusive, but offers a starting point for the typical dwelling unit.

DWELLING INTERIOR

Walls & Ceilings: Loose peeling paint, large open cracks, deteriorated or water-damaged plaster.

Floors: Sound, clean, sanitary. Kitchen and bath are to have floors that can be kept clean and sanitary. If a bathroom floor is carpeted, the carpeting must be the type that can be scrubbed or machine washed, or the floor beneath the carpeting must be water resistant.

Windows: Open cracks, loose/missing glazing, deteriorated sashes, missing sash cords. All windows must be weathertight. Windows located 6 feet or less above ground level or walking surface below shall have a locking device.

Toilet: Improperly secured or loose toilets, defective flushing mechanisms, leaks.

Tub/Shower: Inadequate volume of water, no hot water, loose tile, grout or caulk in walls around tub/shower, dripping faucets.

Lavatory: Dripping faucets, leaks in supply/waste lines, no traps, improper venting.

Bathroom (General): Every dwelling unit must have one bathroom with a lavatory, tub or shower, toilet, one window or mechanical fan for ventilation, one grounded or G.F.C.I. receptacle outlet, one light fixture. Any new receptacle outlets added to a bathroom must be a G.F.C.I. protected.

Kitchen: Improper venting, S traps, or leaky faucets, exposed wiring at vent hood over stove. If dwelling unit has an electric stove, is the receptacle properly installed? When gas is provided, is the piping correctly installed or have a shut-off valve. Flexible connectors for gas piping cannot be run through the floor or a wall.

Minimum Area Requirements Per Person: Every dwelling unit shall have a minimum of 160 square feet of habitable floor area for each occupant. In calculating the number of occupants allowed per dwelling unit, if the resulting fraction is eight-tenths (0.8) person or above, the number of permitted occupants shall be rounded off to the next whole number.

Minimum Ceiling Heights: Habitable spaces shall have a clear ceiling height over the minimum area required by this code of not less than 7 feet (2134 mm) except that in attics or top half-stories, the ceiling height shall not be less than 7 feet over not less than one-third of the minimum areas required by this code when used for sleeping, study or similar activity. In calculating the floor area of such rooms, only those portions of the floor area of the room having a clear ceiling height of 5 feet (1524mm) or more shall be included. Minimum ceiling heights for Use Groups A, B, E and M shall be seven and one-third feet (7 1/3).

Smoke Detectors: All dwelling units shall be provided with a minimum of one approved single-station smoke detector in each bedroom, outside of each sleeping area and on each floor level including the basement. When actuated, the smoke detector shall provide an alarm suitable to warn the occupants within the individual room or unit.

Tampering: Anyone tampering or interfering with the effectiveness of a smoke detector shall be in violation of this code.

Responsibilities: For rental property, the owners shall be responsible for testing and maintaining smoke detectors in common areas. It shall be the responsibility of the tenant to provide and maintain functional batteries for each smoke detector and to test and maintain smoke detectors within their dwelling units and to notify the owner or authorized agent, in writing, of any deficiencies. The owner shall be responsible for providing each tenant with written information regarding smoke detector testing and maintenance.

Locked Doors: All doors in the required means of egress shall be readily openable from the inner side without the use of keys. Exits from dwelling units, hotel units, lodging houses, and dormitory units shall not lead through other such units or through toilet rooms or bathrooms.

When a fire occurs in a dwelling, precious time can be lost looking for the keys. After fires in which fatalities occur, fire fighters commonly find victims by the door.

Habitable Spaces (General):

All habitable rooms shall have a minimum of two remote electrical outlets.

Light fixtures are required in the following locations:

Every exterior stairway and landing.

Every public hall, interior stairway, water closet compartment, bathroom, laundry room and furnace room, shall contain at least one electric light fixture.

All other spaces shall be provided with natural or artificial light of sufficient intensity as to permit the maintenance and safe use of the space.

Every laundry area and bathroom shall have a grounded or G.F.C.I. outlet.
A bathroom is defined as having a lavatory, tub or shower, and a toilet.
A room with only a toilet is a water closet and is required to have a lavatory in the closet or adjacent to the closet.
A habitable room, other than a kitchen, shall not be less than 7 feet in any plan dimension.
Every flight of stairs over 4 risers high shall have a continuous handrail on at least one side.
Every dwelling unit must have at least one exit. This means a clear path of egress with no double dead-bolt locks on any door required for exit.
Extension cords are not permitted for permanent use. If they are attached to the structure or nailed, stapled, or passed through doors or walls, they are considered permanent.

Basement Electric:

Check for a minimum 60-amp service. Although we do not disassemble any part of a structure or equipment, if most of the wires from the service panel are 14-2 or 12-2 wires, and the service panel is full of 30-amp fuses, the panel is over-fused. The owner must have properly sized fuses that correspond to wire size.

All splices must be in a junction box. Only original splices with Knob and Tube wiring is allowed outside of a junction box.

Knob and Tube wiring is perfectly acceptable in its original form. As long as the wiring is in good shape, it should not be a cause for concern. Romex wiring for the smaller wires, 14-2, 12-2, 10-2 are required to be run alongside of a joist, or one wire per hole drilled through the center of the joist.

Romex can be run beneath the joists if within 3" of a center beam or wall. Romex wiring that's run down a wall must be in an approved raceway or attached to the side of a guard board. The purpose of these requirements for Romex wiring is to protect the wiring from physical damage.

Basement Plumbing: The supply and drain lines shall be in sound condition, free of leaks, and properly installed. Beware of structural members that may have been butchered by the installation of piping.

Washing machines can be drained indirectly by piping to a floor drain. They may not be drained into an untrapped pipe out of a stack clean out.

Basement bathrooms or water closets must be separately vented. They cannot be trapped off of the house stack.

Basement (General): Check to see that all structural members are safely bearing their loads and show no signs of distress or deterioration.

- < Check foundation walls for open cracks.
- < See if basement is generally clean.
- < Check furnace and water heater vent pipes for signs of deterioration; vent pipes shall have screws installed to secure the sections together.
- < Water heaters must have a temperature/pressure relief valve of the same diameter as the opening hole; the diameter cannot be reduced downward. From the temperature/pressure relief valve, a discharge pipe of the same diameter as the valve must extend to within 6" of the basement floor. The discharge pipe must be copper or galvanized steel pipe; no plastic piping or tubing is permitted.
- < Boilers for home heating must also have a proper pressure valve.
- < The vents of gas appliances must be securely terminated into an approved chimney.
- < If water meter is in basement, check that a jumper wire is installed over meter for grounding of the electrical system.

Stairs & Porches: See that all structural elements are in good condition, and that handrails and guardrails are properly installed where required. Be sure stair treads are firm and free from cracks.

Exterior (General): Check structure for peeling and flaking paint, loose or deteriorated wall material, and tuck pointing of masonry walls. (This requires the application of the building inspectors experience and judgment.)

Generally recommend inspecting the interior of the structure first. If dampness or evidence of water damage is evident, check outside walls and roof areas for possible causes. Mortar joints in need of tuck pointing will often let in moisture. Check flashing around chimney, etc.

If there is any doubt that a plumbing fixture is being vented, check to see vent pipe extending through roof. Check exterior yard areas for tall grass and weeds, and for trash and debris.

Derelict cars should be referred to the Police Department.

SECTION 113.0 RESIDENTIAL OCCUPANCY PERMIT

113.1 **Occupancy permit required:** No person shall hereafter occupy and no person as owner or agent thereof shall permit the occupation of any building or addition thereto or part thereof for any purpose until an occupancy permit has been issued by the building commissioner.

113.2 **Occupancy permit; certificate of compliance; fees; false statements:**

- (A) Prior to issuance of an occupancy permit, a building shall be inspected by the building commissioner for compliance with the building and housing codes of the City of Richmond Heights.
- (B) The owner or agent shall request an inspection to determine the degree of compliance. The request shall be in writing on an application form available from the office of the building commissioner. Fee for such inspection shall be sixty-five (\$65.00) dollars.
- (C) Premises inspected and complying with the minimum standards of the City of Richmond Heights shall be issued a certificate of compliance.
- (D) The certificate of compliance shall be valid for no more than one hundred (180) days from the date of issuance. The owner or agent of a premises may allow occupancy of said building within the one hundred (180) day period, provided the tenant or resident owner has secured an occupancy permit from the building commissioner within this (180) day period. The fee for such occupancy permit shall be fifty dollars (\$15.00).
- (E) No person shall knowingly make a false statement in an application for an occupancy permit concerning name, ages, relationship, or number of persons who shall occupy the premises for which the permit is sought.
- (F) A fee of twenty (\$20.00) shall accompany each request for a residential temporary occupancy permit.
- (G) Prior to a building, dwelling unit or tenant space being occupied, the proposed space to be occupied shall be inspected and approved, with an occupancy permit issued before the building owner shall allow occupancy. Should occupancy occur prior to the issuance of an occupancy permit, the building owner shall pay a penalty fee of one hundred dollars. (\$100.00)

113.3 **Compliance with chapter:** An occupancy permit, when issued, shall state that the proposed occupancy complies with all of the above provisions of this chapter, as far as can be determined by a visual inspection of the premises and a review of the records.

113.3.1 A temporary occupancy permit for a limited time, with conditions, may be granted by the building commissioner only after the applicant for the permit (the owner, agent or purchaser of the premises) shall have first furnished a written statement, under oath, to the building commissioner setting forth the reason(s) the premises cannot meet the minimum occupancy standards before occupation and the period of time requested by the applicant for temporary occupancy permit of such premises. Failure to abate all code deficiencies and to have the premises re inspected before expiration of the temporary occupancy permit will be a violation of this ordinance and will be subject to the penalties set forth in Section 100.150 of The Municipal Code.

The temporary occupancy permit shall be granted by the building commissioner only upon his finding that total compliance with the requirements for an occupancy permit are impossible or impractical for the applicant within the time necessary and that a temporary occupancy permit is necessary to prevent undue hardship to the occupant and will not create health and/or safety risks for applicant. The temporary permit shall be granted only for such time as the building commissioner deems reasonably necessary to achieve full compliance, and in any event not to exceed one hundred twenty (120) days. The building commissioner shall also determine that the application for the temporary occupancy permit is not designed to evade or avoid the minimum occupancy permit requirements.